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Report of the Board of Auditors on progress in the handling of information and communications technology affairs in the Secretariat

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Board of Auditors on progress in the handling of information and communications technology (ICT) affairs in the Secretariat (A/70/581). The Committee also had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Board's report (A/70/607).

2. During its consideration of the above-mentioned reports, the Advisory Committee met with the members of the Audit Operations Committee as well as with the representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided clarification and additional information in writing, concluding with written responses submitted on 22 February 2016.

II. Background and context

3. Background information is provided in paragraphs 1 to 6 of the report of the Board of Auditors (see also A/67/770, paras. 5-19). The Advisory Committee recalls that in December 2012 the Board of Auditors issued a report (A/67/651) in response to the request in General Assembly resolution 66/246 that the Board audit and evaluate the handling of ICT affairs in the Secretariat. In its related report, which was endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 67/254 (sect. I, para. 2), the Advisory Committee requested that the Board follow up on the implementation of its recommendations (A/67/770, para. 69).

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4. Since the issuance of the Board's first report, the following reports related to the ICT strategy have been considered by the General Assembly:

(a) Progress on the implementation of recommendations related to strengthening information and systems security across the Secretariat (A/68/552) and the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/68/7/Add.11) (see General Assembly resolution 68/247);

(b) Proposals for a revised ICT strategy for the Secretariat (A/69/517) and the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/69/610) (see General Assembly resolution 69/262);

(c) Proposed programme budget for 2016-2017, containing a series of proposals related to the implementation of the ICT strategy (A/70/6 (Sect. 29A-Sect. 29H) and the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/70/7) (see also General Assembly resolution 70/248);

(d) Status of implementation of the ICT strategy (A/70/364 and Corr.1) and the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/70/7/Add.18) (see General Assembly resolution 70/248).

III. Key findings and recommendations of the Board

5. The Board indicates that its current report is based on an audit conducted between September and October 2015. The Board examines progress made in addressing the concerns raised in its report of 2012 about:

(a) Information security, including progress in implementing the 10-point security plan covering prevention; incident detection and response; governance and compliance; and disaster recovery issues;

(b) The revised ICT strategy, including issues related to the development of the strategy; internal consultation and buy-in to the strategy; funding for the ICT strategy; alignment of business plans with the ICT strategy; governance and accountability; scope and remit of the Chief Information Technology Officer; understanding and prioritizing investment in ICT; application management; and ICT skills in the Secretariat;

(c) Progress in implementing the revised ICT strategy, in particular provision of support to Umoja, the enterprise resource planning system; harmonization of ICT services across the United Nations; business intelligence and data analytics projects in support of wider business objectives; and project management issues.

6. The overall conclusion of the Board is that the Secretariat has taken action to respond to its previous report and recommendations. The Board considers the revised ICT strategy to be a pragmatic first step in responding to its concerns, noting that the strategy is focused on the standardization of ICT policies, applications and procedures, and the harmonization of various support structures. The Board also notes that tangible progress has been made in areas such as the regional technology centres and the global service help desk to support the deployment of Umoja.

7. The Board considers however that fundamental managerial and structural issues identified in its last report have not yet been fully addressed. These include the continued lack of (a) clarity over the role and authority of the Chief Information Technology Officer; (b) finalization of delegations of authority to and from the Chief Information Technology Officer; (c) agreement over which ICT activities require central control and which require or merit operational freedom; (d) buy-in to the ICT strategy; and (e) establishment of a comprehensive five-year indicative budget projection for ICT that includes peacekeeping requirements, which represent some 72 per cent of overall ICT expenditure. The Board has made a total of seven new recommendations to address these issues, and also follows up on the implementation status of the 16 recommendations contained in the previous report (A/67/651).

IV. General comments

8. The Advisory Committee welcomes the Board's report, and concurs with the observations and recommendations made by the Board. The Committee commends the Board for the depth of its analysis, the scope of its audit, and the continued high quality of its work. In the Committee's view, the report makes an important contribution to the General Assembly's consideration of progress made in the implementation of its decisions regarding the ICT strategy of the United Nations. The Advisory Committee therefore recommends that the General Assembly request that the Board of Auditors submit an annual progress report during the five-year implementation period of the ICT strategy.

9. The Advisory Committee also welcomes the progress made thus far in the implementation of the ICT strategy. In its report on the status of implementation of the ICT strategy (see A/70/7/Add.18, para. 9), the Committee noted the efforts made to prioritize the development of capacities to support the roll-out of Umoja such as the establishment of an enterprise service desk supported by the regional technology centres and the enterprise application centres, as well as the improvements in the connectivity and management of the global enterprise network. The Committee also expressed its view that initial steps had been taken towards the process of transformation of the highly-fragmented ICT environment of the Secretariat.

10. However, the Advisory Committee is deeply concerned that the efforts made to redress the managerial and structural issues identified in the Board's previous report (A/67/651) fall well below what is necessary, and little progress appears to have been made towards the achievement of effective governance, management and operational arrangements for ICT matters in the Secretariat (see General Assembly resolution 69/262, para. 16). The Advisory Committee considers that these continued weaknesses present a major risk to the successful implementation of the ICT strategy, and have already resulted in delays, including the failure to present the comprehensive five-year ICT budget projection for the Secretariat requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 69/262, to serve as a baseline for measuring progress in improving efficiency and effectiveness and for establishing the Organization's future ICT funding priorities (see A/70/7/Add.18, paras. 11-12; and A/70/581, paras. 62-64).

11. **Furthermore, the Advisory Committee is of the view that ICT systems and infrastructure enable development of other major business transformation initiatives such as the mainstreaming of Umoja and shared services, and that delays in the implementation of the ICT strategy are also likely to impact negatively on the successful delivery of those initiatives.**

V. Observations and comments on specific aspects of the handling of information and communications technology affairs in the Secretariat

A. Follow-up to the recommendations of the Board of Auditors

Recommendations contained in the Board's previous report (A/67/651)

12. Information on the action taken by the Secretariat to address the Board's previous recommendations is provided in paragraphs 9 and 10 and in the relevant sections of the Board's current report (A/70/581). The annex to the report also provides a summary of the implementation status of each recommendation and comments by both the Secretariat and the Board as of November 2015. As indicated in its report, the Board considers 2 of the 16 recommendations to have been fully implemented, with the remaining 14 under implementation.

13. From the annex to the Board's report, the Advisory Committee notes that, in a number of instances, the Board's comments indicate that the Secretariat's response and plans do not address the issues raised in its recommendations, and that there are also differences of opinion regarding progress achieved in implementing the recommendations. As an example of such differences, the Board provided the Advisory Committee with the following table comparing the status of implementation of 47 extant recommendations from prior periods as reported in annex I to the Board's report on the financial statements of the United Nations (A/70/5 (Vol. I)) and the corresponding report of the Secretary-General (A/70/338 and Corr.1, paras. 79-82).

Status of implementation of recommendations from prior periods reported in annex I to the report of the Board of Auditors on the financial statements of the United Nations and the corresponding report of the Secretary-General

Implementation status	*Report of the Board of Auditors (A/70/5 (Vol. I)) July 2015*	*Report of the Secretary-General (A/70/338) August 2015*
Implemented	5	10
Under implementation/in progress	19	32
Not implemented	18	0
Closed by the Board	5	5
Total	**47**	**47**

14. With regard to the table, the Board informed the Advisory Committee that it questioned the Secretariat's view that five recommendations had been implemented in the month of August 2015, particularly when the recommendations in question

related to ongoing areas of concern such as the capacity to manage organizational change and responding to fraud. The Board also questioned the Secretariat's classification of 13 recommendations judged by the Board as "not implemented" in July 2015 as "in progress" in August 2015, indicating that it was not inclined to give credit for preparatory activities such as holding a meeting or drafting high-level plans as evidence that the implementation was under way. The Board informed the Committee that it would review progress in implementing recommendations during its next audit of the United Nations financial statements (Volume I) in mid-2016 and provide clarifications on any differences of opinion with the Secretariat regarding their implementation status.

15. In this connection, the Advisory Committee recalls that, in its resolution 66/232 B concerning the accountability framework, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure the full implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors in a prompt and timely manner, as well as to continue to indicate priorities, an expected time frame and the office holders to be held accountable for their implementation. **The Advisory Committee considers the implementation of the recommendations of oversight bodies to be a key managerial responsibility, and requests the Board of Auditors to continue to provide the General Assembly with its comments and observations on the plans envisaged and actions taken by the Secretariat in response to its recommendations, as well as its views regarding their implementation status. In this regard, the Advisory Committee stresses the importance not only of acceptance of the recommendations by the Secretariat, but also of their full and timely implementation in a manner that addresses the causes of the issues identified by the Board.**

16. On a related matter, the issue of reiterated recommendations was raised during an exchange with the Board in the context of the Advisory Committee's consideration of the report of the Board of Auditors on peacekeeping operations (A/70/5 (Vol. II)). As indicated in the report of the Board, although the nominal rate of implementation of its recommendations remained more or less static, with a marginal increase from 51 per cent in 2013/14 to 52 per cent in 2014/15, the recommendations shown with a status of "implemented" included recommendations that had been reiterated and closed in the previous report only to avoid duplication. If those recommendations were excluded, the actual rate of implementation fell to 28 per cent. **In view of the foregoing, the Advisory Committee requests the Board to consider making a distinction between new and reiterated recommendations. It is of the view that the number of reiterated recommendations could serve as an indicator of performance regarding the implementation of recommendations, with a high number indicating poor performance and, conversely, a low number reflecting a positive result.**

Recommendations contained in the Board's current report (A/70/581)

17. The Board has made seven new recommendations which are listed in the summary to its current report, and the Secretariat's response is contained in document A/70/607. The Advisory Committee notes that the Secretariat has accepted all the recommendations, with the exception of the first recommendation,[1]

[1] Clarify the role and authority of the Chief Information Technology Officer in field operations by setting out clearly which activities require strong central control and which activities require or merit operational freedom.

which is accepted only partially (A/70/607, para. 3). Upon enquiry, the Board informed the Advisory Committee that its report had been cleared with the offices of the Under-Secretaries-General for Management and Field Support in accordance with normal Board of Auditors protocols with no indication of a "partial acceptance" of that recommendation. The Board also indicated that it was not clear which elements of the recommendation were subsequently not accepted by the Secretariat. The Board further indicated that it would seek additional clarification from the Secretariat on its characterization of "partial acceptance" of that recommendation. The Advisory Committee requests that further clarification on the Secretariat's position be provided to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the present report.

18. **The Advisory Committee notes the brevity and lack of detail in the report of the Secretary-General (A/70/607), and considers that the substance of the report of the Secretary-General is not commensurate with the in-depth analysis of a broad range of strategic, managerial and operational issues presented in the Board's report.** Upon enquiry as to the Board's views in this regard, the Board indicated that, overall, the nature and tone of the Secretariat's responses did not appear to recognize the urgency and seriousness of the Board's concerns, and that references to "continuing efforts" suggested that the Secretariat might be adopting a "business as usual" approach to addressing those concerns. Furthermore, in the Board's view, such an approach would not tackle the fundamental managerial and structural issues highlighted in the report. **The Advisory Committee expects that, in the future, the Secretariat will provide more detailed information on the actions envisaged to address the Board's observations and recommendations, as well as a clear timeframe for their implementation.**

B. Governance and accountability

Information and communications technology policies and procedures

19. Four of the seven recommendations made by the Board pertain to matters regarding ICT governance, policies and procedures, delegation of authority and accountability. Upon a request for clarification regarding the "delegation of authority document" referred to in the last sentence of paragraph 3 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/70/607), the Secretariat informed the Advisory Committee that the Secretary-General's Bulletins, Administrative Instructions and technical procedures for the Office of Information and Communications Technology formed a set of documents that, taken together, established delegation of authority for ICT in the Secretariat, in a manner similar to that applied for delegation of authority in the other administrative areas covered by the Department of Management, including human resources, financial and supply chain management. Delegation of authority for each of the above-mentioned administrative areas was achieved through a multi-step process including definition of the central role and authority of each area; delegation of authority from the Secretary-General; and establishment of a policy governing further delegation of authority and the limits of that delegation, along with a body of rules, regulations, policies and standards that personnel assuming the delegated functions are required to comply with.

20. With regard to the status of issuance of the above-mentioned documents, the Secretariat informed the Advisory Committee, upon enquiry, that a preliminary

review had been conducted by the Office of Legal Affairs and that consultations with Secretariat departments and offices were ongoing in advance of the consideration of the documents by the executive leadership of the Secretariat.

21. **The Advisory Committee points out that the process of the revision of the governance structure and the establishment of policies and procedures for the Office of Information and Communications Technology has been ongoing for several years (see A/67/770, para. 44). The Committee is deeply concerned by the delays accumulated in implementing the requests made in section II, paragraphs 16 and 18, of General Assembly resolution 69/262,[2] and considers that there is an urgent need for the effective operationalization of ICT governing structures and the promulgation of a comprehensive set of ICT policies and procedures, including clarification of roles and responsibilities with regard to ICT matters and specification of clear delegations of authority. The Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to expedite the ongoing reviews and consultations and to issue, as a matter of priority, the relevant official documents, including the Secretary-General's Bulletin, Administrative Instructions and technical procedures for the Office of Information and Communications Technology.**

Disagreements between stakeholders

22. The Board is of the view that the absence of clear and agreed terms of reference detailing the decision-making authority for the governance bodies has impeded resolution of key issues and disagreements as well as the enforcement of compliance with key aspects of the strategy. The Board provides various examples to illustrate some of the time-consuming disagreements and difficulties that arose in 2015 between the Departments of Management and Field Support, namely (a) a pilot project investing in low orbit satellite telecommunication facilities, also referred to as "O3b" or "other 3 billion" networks,[3] with a total cost of $24 million (see A/70/581, paras. 59-60; see also para. 23 below); (b) denial of access to the Office of Information and Communications Technology to undertake checks on the firewalls of the systems of the Department of Field Support (ibid., para. 9; see also

[2] Paragraphs 16 and 18 of the resolution read:

16. *Recalls* its resolution 63/262, acknowledges the responsibilities and the importance of the strong central leadership of the Chief Information Technology Officer for the overall direction and performance of information and communications technology activities within the Organization, and in this regard emphasizes the need for appropriate delegation of authority and procedures for ensuring compliance with the revised information and communications technology strategy guidelines on, inter alia, operations, security, investment and oversight at United Nations offices, in particular those related to the field;

18. *Recalls* paragraph 43 of the report of the Advisory Committee, requests the Secretary-General to ensure that all entities of the Secretariat report to the Chief Information Technology Officer on all issues relating to information and communications technology activities, resource management, standards, security, architecture, policies and guidance, and also requests the Secretary-General to provide, at the seventieth session of the General Assembly, a progress report on lessons learned in this regard, for its consideration;

[3] O3b Networks is a commercial provider of low latency, broadband satellite services to connect the "other 3 billion" people who have limited or no access to broadband for reasons of geography, political instability and economics and whose client segments include markets in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific.

para. 24 below); and (c) lack of collaboration in addressing serious security threats and sharing of information with the Office of Information and Communications Technology (ibid., paras. 21-22; see also para. 25 below).

23. With regard to the low orbit satellite telecommunication facilities pilot project, the Advisory Committee notes from the Board's report that, following various communications, the Chief Information Technology Officer, with deep reservations and understanding how critical it was to the Department of Field Support, supported the project to proceed to the next steps, as an exception (A/70/581, para. 60). The Advisory Committee was also informed that the Board's formal review of e-mail correspondence between the Chief Information Technology Officer, the Assistant Secretary-General for Field Support and the Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services over the period from 15 April to 24 June 2015 revealed a series of disagreements, including (a) whether the Chief Information Technology Officer had a role in reviewing the proposal and if it should be reviewed by the ICT Project Review Committee; and (b) if O3b was the correct technology for the Department of Field Support and whether the business case put forward by the Department was robust enough.

24. With regard to the denial of access to the Office of Information and Communications Technology to undertake checks of information security on firewalls of the Department of Field Support's systems (see A/70/581, para. 9), the Board's report indicates that this undermined efforts to fully resolve weaknesses in information security. The Board informed the Advisory Committee that there were opposing points of view on whether the Office of Information and Communications Technology should have access to firewalls operated by the Department for Field Support and different interpretations of the extant policies and procedures.[4] However, the Office of Information and Communications Technology was granted access to the firewalls of the Department's systems after the Board informed senior management of the Department that its failure to comply with the request of the Office for access to their firewalls had posed a risk to information security across the United Nations as a whole. **In this connection, the Advisory Committee stresses the relevance of paragraph 12 of section II of General Assembly resolution 69/262,[5] in which the Assembly stated unequivocally the central leadership of the Chief Information Technology Officer for ICT security across the Secretariat.**

25. The Board also indicates in its report that there have been a number of other security concerns in 2015, including specific incidents affecting interconnected data centres, in which the Office of Information and Communications Technology and the Department of Field Support did not work collaboratively together to address a serious security threat. Furthermore, at the time of the conclusion of the Board's audit, the Office of Information and Communications Technology had not yet been provided with information on the design of the Department of Field Support networks or other key information requested by the Office. The Advisory

[4] Firewall Protection United Nations Secretariat ICT Technical Procedure, section 4.2 (f), dated 7 May 2014, endorsed by the ICT policy committee and signed by the Chief Information Technology Officer.

[5] The paragraph reads:

12. *Underlines* the importance of strong and accountable management of information security, and recognizes the need to ensure central control of information security and the Chief Information Technology Officer as the central authority for information security;

Committee requests that an update on this matter be provided to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the present report.

26. **While recognizing that, pending the promulgation of the relevant official documents, lines of authority and responsibility remain unclear, the Advisory Committee considers nevertheless that the Departments of Management and Field Support — which are also two of the ICT strategy's main stakeholders — should have adopted a more collaborative and cooperative approach and taken into account the decisions taken by the General Assembly in its resolution 69/262, which clearly attribute to the Chief Information Technology Officer central authority for the overall direction and performance of ICT activities as well as for information security across the Organization.**

27. **The Advisory Committee considers the above-mentioned incidents to be illustrative of the type of day-to-day dysfunction that poses risks to the operations of the Organization and can also result in the inefficient and ineffective use of resources. The Advisory Committee therefore sought further explanations regarding the incidents and the failure to comply with General Assembly resolution 69/262, including on the responsibilities and accountabilities, underlying circumstances, whether the matters were escalated for decision to a higher level such as the Management Committee, and on the action taken, if any, to assess and mitigate related risks. However, the Committee did not receive a full response in time for the issuance of the present report, and therefore requests the Secretary-General to provide the General Assembly with the information requested at the time of its consideration of the present report as well as an update on the procedures in place for addressing security threats and the sharing of security-related information.**

28. **The Advisory Committee strongly believes that accountability is key to the successful management of any organization or reform initiative. It is of the view that there is a need to clarify responsibilities and enforce accountability for the above-mentioned issues. The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to report to it on the action taken in this regard.**

Investments in information and communications technology

29. The example of the low-orbit satellite capability pilot project (see para. 23 above raises further questions regarding the decision-making process within the Secretariat on high-value ICT infrastructure investments, the presentation of such investments in budgetary proposals and their approval by the General Assembly.

30. Upon enquiry as to the existing procedures for approval of ICT investments, the Secretariat informed the Advisory Committee that ICT initiatives estimated to cost more than $200,000 in combined monetary and staff resources over a four-year period must be reviewed by the Project Review Committee, which recommends decisions to the Chief Information Technology Officer. ICT initiatives were defined as any project or activity, irrespective of its source(s) of funding or cost, that will result in a new or modified ICT resource. Furthermore, pursuant to General Assembly resolutions pertaining to the ICT strategy (resolutions 69/262 and 70/248), the Chief Information Technology Officer was granted authority to review all ICT investments and the authority to delegate and rescind such authority as necessary to facilitate operational efficiency and implementation of the ICT

strategy. However, as indicated above (paras. 21-22), enforcement procedures have not yet been finalized and compliance with the policy has not yet been achieved. Upon a request for information on ICT projects with total costs of $1 million or above implemented over the previous two-year period, the Secretariat informed the Advisory Committee that, given the status of fragmentation of the ICT environment, the Office of Information and Communications Technology has been unable to achieve the necessary visibility of ICT projects or initiatives.

31. **In view of the existing procedures for approval of ICT investments, and notwithstanding the pending formalization of administrative rules regarding the activities subject to central control and those that require or merit operational freedom, the Advisory Committee sees no reason why, as a project with a total cost of $24 million, the low-orbit satellite capability pilot project was not subjected to internal procedures and submitted for review by the Project Review Committee and decision by the Chief Information Technology Officer. Furthermore, in addition to budgetary concerns, the Committee considers that, as a major investment in technology infrastructure using emerging technologies, it is essential that such a project be supported by a detailed business case and also be vetted for interoperability, compatibility and compliance with United Nations standards and existing infrastructure and systems. In addition, the needs of all relevant Secretariat field-based entities should be taken into account during the decision-making process.**

32. With regard to resource requirements, the Advisory Committee recalls that the $24 million low-orbit satellite capability pilot project was not properly presented in the budgetary proposals for either the 2014/15 or the 2015/16 period, and requested clarification regarding the budgetary transparency and approval of the requirements of the pilot project. Upon request for further clarification on this matter, the Committee was informed that research conducted by the Board showed that references to the project were made in the Secretary-General's overview report on peacekeeping operations for 2015/16 (A/69/751/Rev.1) as follows:

(a) In paragraph 125 of the report, which reads:

> In addition, in an effort to broaden the range of communications solutions available to its user community, the Department of Field Support is exploring alternatives such as fibre and traditional geostationary satellites to current methods of interconnecting field missions. By utilizing middle-mile providers that bridge the space between the Internet backbone and earth-based last mile providers that offer 2G, 3G, wimax, LTE, broadband wireless (Wi-Fi), the Department aims to deliver much lower-latency services, especially for voice and real-time applications. It is expected that such efforts will result in transformational gains in providing more agile support for information and communications technology services, especially with respect to basic connectivity.

(b) In table 19, entitled "Efficiency gains included in 2015/16 budget reports", under the entries for the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), it is stated that:

> The Mission plans to increase the Internet bandwidth from 84Mb to 160Mb by June 2016 using the synergy of Intelsat, fibre and low-latency satellite technologies. The Mission is targeting to exploit the latest emerging

technologies, such as the O3b network and the fibre infrastructure in the country. No additional savings are expected and the project will be realized using existing resources with no additional funds required and will significantly enhance Internet coverage, productivity and user experience.

33. Upon a request for further details concerning the resource requirements of the project, the Secretariat informed the Advisory Committee that the funding for the project had been or will be included in the budget submissions of the missions included in the pilot[6] for the 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18 periods under the object of expenditure commercial communications and equipment. The requirements for the Regional Service Centre at Entebbe had been distributed among the participating missions.

34. **The Advisory Committee finds the explanation given by the Secretariat, which purports to show that the General Assembly had been properly informed, to be unsatisfactory. The Advisory Committee regrets the total lack of transparency in the budget proposals for the 2015/16 period regarding the requirements and justification for the $24 million infrastructure project.** It is not clear to the Committee whether this reflects an isolated case or is reflective of a routine approach to the presentation of requirements for such projects. The Committee will seek further clarification from the Secretariat during its upcoming consideration of the Secretary-General's proposals for peacekeeping budgets for the 2016/17 period.

35. **The Advisory Committee is of the view that all ICT proposals need to be presented clearly in budget documents. It considers that projects with a total cost of $200,000 or more, that are subject to internal vetting by the Project Review Committee and have been approved by the Chief Information Technology Officer, should be explicitly identified with their objectives and proposed resource requirements, and presented for consideration by the General Assembly in the relevant budget document(s). In addition, the Advisory Committee is of the view that all ICT projects or initiatives with total costs starting from a specified threshold level — for instance $1 million — should be supported by a business case with a level of detail that is commensurate with the size of the project.** The Committee will comment further on this matter in the context of its report on crosscutting issues related to peacekeeping operations and relevant reports on individual mission budgets.

Review of information and communications technology budgets

36. The latest report of the Secretary-General on the status of implementation of the ICT strategy (A/70/364 and Corr.1, para. 8) provided information on the effort being undertaken by the Office of Information and Communications Technology, working closely with the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts and the Office of Central Support Services to ensure that departmental investment and project proposals were subjected to central review, prior to their submission to the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts. The report also indicated that

[6] Eight sites have been selected for the pilot, at the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (2 sites), the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2 sites), the United Nations Support Office in Somalia, the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei and the Regional Service Centre at Entebbe.

major investments in technologies and acquisitions would be assessed by the Office of Information and Communications Technology prior to the solicitation process being launched by the Procurement Division (see also A/70/7/Add.18, paras. 18-19).

37. In this regard the Advisory Committee enquired whether the Chief Information Technology Officer had examined the ICT proposals in the peacekeeping budget proposals for all peacekeeping missions and the support account for the 2016/17 period. The Committee was informed that the Chief Information Technology Officer would have an opportunity to review all proposals and was coordinating the process with the Department of Field Support and the Peacekeeping Financing Division in the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts. **The Advisory Committee is of the view that the process followed in preparing the peacekeeping budgets proposed for the 2016/17 period does not respond to General Assembly resolution 69/262 (para. 16; see para. 21 above). The Advisory Committee underlines that the Chief Information Technology Officer, from the outset, should be fully engaged in the budget preparation process, including providing clear instructions for the preparation of the budget proposals based on Secretariat-wide ICT standards and priorities. The Committee will revert to this matter in the context of its upcoming consideration of peacekeeping budgets for the 2016/17 period.**

C. Information security

38. In response to the concerns raised in the Board's previous report (A/67/651), the Secretary-General proposed a 10-point information security action plan (see A/68/552) which was endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 68/247. Table 1 of the Board's current report (A/70/581) provides an update, provided by the Secretariat, on the implementation status of the action plan which shows that, as of October 2015, the overall 10-point plan was 62.5 per cent complete, with four of the initiatives complete and six rated as in progress but on track. The Board indicates that progress has been made in the areas of prevention, incident detection and response, and governance risk and compliance.

39. In its report, the Board indicates that it is concerned by the slow progress made in implementing corporate-wide information security arrangements and at the continuing duplication of some activities by the Office of Information and Communications Technology and the Department of Field Support (A/70/581, para. 24). It notes, for instance, that there are two systems in place for monitoring system performance and parallel staffing arrangements in place for running ICT affairs and infrastructure. The Board also notes that its recommendation that the Secretariat should explore the setting-up of an Organization-wide computer emergency response team (A/69/5 (Vol. II)) has not yet been implemented.

40. In this connection, the Advisory Committee recalls that, in its report on the status of implementation of the ICT strategy (see A/70/7/Add.18, paras. 24-25), it expressed its expectation that a common security policy was being applied across the Secretariat, including in all peacekeeping entities, and recommended that the Secretary-General be requested to provide an update on this matter in his next report. **The Advisory Committee stresses the need to eliminate duplication of ICT activities, systems and staff dedicated to information security and**

recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to provide details on this effort in his next progress report.

Information security and disaster recovery

41. With regard to disaster recovery, in its report on the status of implementation of the ICT strategy (see A/70/7/Add.18, paras. 24-25), the Advisory Committee requested that a detailed update on the status of migration of the 171 critical systems, as well as on the requirements for providing disaster recovery capabilities for the remaining systems, be provided in the Secretary-General's next report. The Board provides an update on the status of critical applications in paragraphs 25 to 28 of its report (A/70/581), which indicates that an analysis of the 171 critical applications carried out by the Office of Information and Communications Technology shows that only 11 of the 171 critical systems had advanced disaster recovery capabilities. The Board further indicates that the Office's analysis of industry best practice suggests that large multinational organizations typically have no more than 15 to 20 business critical systems, and that the Office of Information and Communications Technology is working with affected departments and offices to identify a list of 24 critical applications for endorsement by the Senior Emergency Policy Team. This issue is also discussed in the report of the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of the organizational resilience management system (A/70/660) and the related report of the Advisory Committee.

Mandatory information security awareness training

42. With regard to prevention, it is indicated that a web-based training course on information security awareness was introduced in October 2014 which is mandatory for all ICT users in the Secretariat, and that a circular announcing the course established a series of target dates and deadlines for all staff to complete the training by July 2015. The Board's report provides details on its examination of the number of staff having completed the course in 13 Headquarters departments, which show a low overall compliance rate (19 per cent) with a range from 7 to 82 per cent for individual departments. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was provided with additional information on the compliance rates, as of February 2016, of Offices away from Headquarters and the regional commissions, which range between 23 and 83 per cent and are summarized in the table below:

Office or commission	*Percentage*
United Nations Office at Geneva	52
United Nations Office at Vienna	82
United Nations Office at Nairobi	32
Economic Commission for Africa	23
Economic Commission for Europe	46
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	83
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	49
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	40

43. The Board notes that the performance measure adopted by the Office of Information and Communications Technology for information security awareness —

deployment of the mandatory training course — suggests that this activity is complete. The Board considers however that tracking the number of staff having completed the training would be a more meaningful measure of progress made in raising awareness of the importance of information security and ensuring that staff are familiar with the established policies and procedures. The Board notes that no sanctions were applied to anyone who failed to complete the course by the target date of July 2015. **The Advisory Committee concurs with the Board regarding the need to enforce compliance and ensure completion of the mandatory training by all staff. Accordingly, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to apply sanctions such as the temporary withdrawal of access to United Nations ICT systems, as suggested by the Board of Auditors, and to report on this matter in his next report on the ICT strategy.**

D. Indicative five-year budget projection

44. In paragraphs 66 to 71 of its report the Board discusses the five-year indicative budget projection for investment in ICT prepared by the Secretariat. The Board has identified a number of limitations in the underlying data and assumptions, particularly that the projection does not contain the required information on peacekeeping ICT requirements, which represent some 72 per cent of the proposed ICT requirements for the Secretariat in 2016-2017 (see also A/70/7/Add.18, paras. 10-12). The Advisory Committee recalls that, in its resolution 70/248, the General Assembly has reiterated the request made in its resolution 69/262 for an indicative, five-year, overall ICT budget projection for the Secretariat, which is to be presented in the context of the next progress report of the Secretary-General. In this regard, the Advisory Committee was informed that the Department of Field Support is committed to gathering, collating and providing comprehensive technical information on its ICT landscape for inclusion in the progress report on the ICT strategy and will work with the Chief Information Technology Officer and her office to produce the budget projections for ICT in peacekeeping for inclusion in the next progress report on the ICT strategy to be submitted at the seventy-first session of the General Assembly. **The Advisory Committee expects that accurate and comprehensive data on the five-year indicative budget projection for all Secretariat entities will be provided to the General Assembly in the context of the Secretary-General's next report on the ICT strategy.**

E. Alignment with the information and communications technology strategy

45. The Board indicates that input and collaboration from business units to date has been slow, and that it has seen limited evidence of plans from the individual business units on the actions they intend to take to achieve the objectives of the strategy (A/70/581, para. 45). The Board also indicates that in July 2015 the Office of Information and Communications Technology promulgated the ICT strategy guidelines to all heads of department, setting out the actions that each entity must undertake for the strategy to be implemented successfully, as well as guidance on the activities to be undertaken across the Secretariat to support implementation of

the strategy in areas such as the establishment of five-year planning assumptions and the harmonization and standardization of ICT structures (ibid., para. 47).

46. **The Advisory Committee stresses that it is incumbent upon the Secretary-General to ensure that all Secretariat entities undertake and complete the required activities to align their ICT activities and plans to those set out in the ICT strategy, in accordance with the relevant decisions of the General Assembly (resolutions 69/262 and 70/248). The Advisory Committee trusts that this process will take place in an orderly manner and stresses in particular the need to formalize, without further delay, the Secretariat-wide ICT policies and procedures and delegation of authority, in order to enforce compliance. The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to provide, in his next progress report, information on the business plans and status of alignment of the ICT activities of each Secretariat entity with the ICT strategy.**

Reclassification of posts

47. In paragraph 43 of its report, the Board indicates that it was informed that since the ICT strategy was approved a number of posts previously classified as ICT posts had been reclassified as non-ICT posts, noting that this could result in the artificial reduction in the number of ICT staff. **The Advisory Committee emphasizes that the reclassification of all established posts must be submitted for consideration by the General Assembly as part of the budget process, and that posts created for a given function cannot be redirected to a different function without prior approval by the General Assembly.**